



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **TWO MEN FACE CHARGES AFTER ICE AGENTS UNCOVER HUMAN SMUGGLING “DROP HOUSE” IN RIVERSIDE**

*Migrants report being held for more than a month, fed only once a day*

LOS ANGELES – Two Guatemalan men, who served as “enforcers” in an Inland Empire human smuggling “drop house” where aliens were reportedly held against their will for weeks and fed only once a day, are expected to make their initial appearance in federal court here this afternoon to face human smuggling and hostage taking charges.

After receiving information about a possible hostage situation at a residence near downtown Riverside, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents went to the home on Brockton Avenue yesterday morning where they found 25 Central American migrants crowded into two of the upstairs bedrooms. The aliens from Ecuador, Guatemala, and El Salvador told ICE agents they had been held for more than a month and threatened repeatedly by the “guards” with a machete. ICE agents say the aliens were essentially imprisoned in the home, blocked from leaving by a deadbolt on an upstairs door and bars on the bedroom windows. Outside, Christmas lights and other holiday decorations gave no hint of the criminal activity playing out inside the house.

As ICE agents were processing the scene, two of the smuggled aliens fainted and had to be given medical attention. ICE agents say the long confinement and lack of food may have contributed to their collapse.

“This incident serves as a reminder of the brutality and ruthlessness of the human smuggling trade,” said Gary Pinkava, assistant special agent-in-charge for ICE in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. “Smugglers only care about one thing, money -- not the victims they abuse, or the lives they endanger.”

The investigation into the smuggling scheme is ongoing. During the search of the home yesterday, ICE agents seized accounting ledgers and other paperwork believed to be related to the smuggling activity. The 25 migrants are still being interviewed by ICE investigators. Some of the aliens are expected to be designated as material witnesses in the smuggling prosecution. The remainder will be placed in immigration removal proceedings.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*